

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington D.C. - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) today expressed grave concerns about the sectarian clash in several villages outside of Jos, Nigeria, resulting in the death of as many as possibly 500 Muslims and Christians.

"When we recommended that the Administration designate Nigeria as a 'country of particular concern' last May, we were expressing our deep concern that a cycle of sectarian violence and impunity was intensifying, and the recent events in and near Jos confirm the precarious state of affairs," said Leonard Leo, USCIRF chair.

In its May 2009 Annual Report, USCIRF outlined a series of policies that the Nigerian government must undertake in order to address the climate of impunity that now exists, and recommended the immediate designation of Nigeria as a "country of particular concern" by the U.S. Administration.

"As we said nearly a year ago, the Nigerian government must investigate and prosecute acts of religious violence, and the United States and others in the international community must offer the Nigerians financial as well as technical assistance aimed at improving conflict mediation and law enforcement," said Mr. Leo.

USCIRF's recommendations can be found [here](#) .

USCIRF expresses its condolences to the families and friends of those who perished in this latest, senseless violence. USCIRF notes that the U.S. Department of State is releasing its annual report on human rights this week and urges the Department to emphasize the intensive recurrent sectarian violence in its coverage and policies.

USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission. USCIRF Commissioners are appointed by the President and the leadership of both political parties in the Senate and the House of Representatives. USCIRF's principal responsibilities are to review the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally and to make policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and Congress.

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